



THE CITY OF SAN DIEGO

HOW TO OBTAIN PERMITS FOR

Commercial Tenant Improvements

CITY OF SAN DIEGO DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
1222 FIRST AVENUE, MS 301, SAN DIEGO, CA 92101-4153
Call (619) 446-5300 for appointments and (619) 446-5000 for information.

INFORMATION
BULLETIN

147

November 2002

This Information Bulletin describes the minimum requirements for obtaining permits for minor, nonstructural, commercial tenant improvements. For clarification of the permit process, call (619) 446-5000, or visit the Development Services Center at 1222 First Avenue, 3rd floor. For Code questions concerning commercial projects, call (619) 446-5400.

I. WHAT IS A TENANT IMPROVEMENT PERMIT?

Tenant improvements are defined as nonstructural interior alterations to an existing commercial or industrial space. A tenant improvement can cover a wide spectrum of job descriptions: completion of the interior of a shell building; installation of a commercial exhaust hood for a restaurant; window and door awnings; facade work; and similar items that do not affect the structural components of a building.

Since the City of San Diego does not issue demolition permits unless an entire building is being demolished, interior demolition (removal of interior partitions and/or walls and their supporting components) is also handled as a tenant improvement permit.

An "over-the-counter" permit can be obtained when building plans can be quickly checked to all applicable city and state ordinances. This allows the applicant to be present during the plan review process and to make minor corrections. The permit can often be issued the same day that plans are presented for review.

The plan review consists of code checks for occupancy requirements including exiting, disabled access, framing for interior walls and suspended ceilings, lighting, electrical layout, duct work, plumbing, energy compliance, land use zoning, and water and sewer requirements.

Extensive tenant improvements and remodels that include structural additions such as mezzanines must be submitted into plan check.

Occasionally, plan review can be done partially over-the-counter and partially by submittal. As a rule of thumb, when Title 24 calculations are required to satisfy energy conservation requirements, or when plumbing fixtures being added total more than nine fixture units on the Water Meter Data Card, at least one set of plans must be submitted into plan review for each of these. The structural, electrical, and zoning plan review might still be done over-the-counter. If in doubt, make an appointment as described in Section II for assistance.

Documents referenced in this Information Bulletin

- General Application (DS-3032)
- Water Meter Data Card (DS-16)
- Hazardous Materials Questionnaire (DS-3163)
- Application for Unreasonable Hardship Exception (IN-2123)
- Hazardous Materials Information (FPB-500)
- Information Bulletin 101, Building Valuation Schedule
- Information Bulletin 102, General Fee Schedule
- Information Bulletin 103, Fee Schedule and Worksheet for Mechanical, Plumbing/Gas, Electrical
- Information Bulletin 104, Schedule for Water and Sewer Fees
- Information Bulletin 116, Disclosure Requirements for Hazardous Materials
- Information Bulletin 120, How to Obtain Project Inspections

Note: The "tenant improvement" permit described here is a building permit only. Separate plumbing, electrical and mechanical permits are required, even though plumbing, electrical and mechanical approvals are obtained on the construction plans. See Information Bulletin 103, "Fee Schedule and Worksheet for Mechanical, Plumbing/Gas, Electrical."

II. THE TENANT IMPROVEMENT APPOINTMENT

For more efficient service, schedule a tenant improvement appointment. This can be done at the Development Services Center, 1222 First Avenue, 3rd floor, or by phoning (619) 446-5300.

By scheduling one tenant improvement appointment, the applicant is automatically scheduled to see plan reviewers in both Information and Application Services and Building Development Review Divisions. If all approvals are obtained on the same day, the applicant may return to Information and Application Services for permit issuance. A second appointment is required if all approvals are not completed on the day of the first appointment.

This information is available in alternative formats for persons with disabilities.
To request this bulletin in alternative format, call (619) 446-5446 or (800) 735-2929 (TT).
Be sure to see us on the World Wide Web at www.ci.san-diego.ca.us/development-services

DS-5147 (11-02)

III. PLAN CHECK FEES

Plan check fees must be paid before plan review. Plan check fees are determined by the nature of the proposed construction. Most construction activities are listed in Information Bulletin 101, "Building Valuation Schedule." Once the valuation of the proposed construction is determined, refer to Information Bulletin 102, "General Fee Schedule," for plan check fees.

Some construction items may not be listed in Information Bulletin 101. When this is the case, Development Services Department relies on the applicant to provide a dollar valuation for the proposed construction. In calculating the valuation, do not include the cost of paint, cabinet work, wall, floor and/or ceiling coverings. Do include the cost of labor.

Checks must be made payable to "City Treasurer" and must be for exact amounts. See Section IX of this publication for building permit and other fees. Since plan check fees must be paid prior to plan review, a separate check is required for plan check fees.

IV. PLAN SPECIFICATIONS

Three sets of plans are required when obtaining over-the-counter tenant improvement permits. The first two sets of plans are identical and contain details of all proposed work, including demolition. Include removal of any plumbing fixtures so proper credit against future water and sewer capacity fees can be determined.

When approved, one of these sets will be retained by Development Services; the other approved set is returned to the applicant and must be made available to the Field Inspector on the job site when inspections are scheduled.

The third set of plans is forwarded to the County Assessor's Office. It consists of a plot plan, floor plan and summary sheet. The summary sheet should contain a brief description of work, the existing and proposed floor area of the tenant space, the owner's name, the tenant's name, the legal description, the project address and the assessor's parcel number.

Plans must be drawn to scale and must be of sufficient clarity to indicate the location, nature and extent of the work proposed. Plans must show in detail that the proposed work will conform to the provisions of the California Building Code, Title 24 of the California Health and Safety Code, and all other relevant laws, ordinances, rules and regulations. Be sure to clearly label all existing and all proposed construction.

V. FORMS TO COMPLETE

A. General Application: All projects must be submitted with a General Application (DS-3032). Instructions can be found on the reverse side of the application. If you intend to obtain your permit on the same day as plan review, the application must be fully com-

pleted. Note: there are *no* exceptions to Workers' Compensation requirements.

If you wish to obtain your electrical, plumbing or mechanical permits from the same application, also completed Information Bulletin 103, "Fee Schedule and Worksheet for Mechanical, Plumbing/Gas, Electrical."

B. Water Meter Data Card: A Water Meter Data Card (DS-16) must be completed if new plumbing fixtures are being added, or if existing fixtures are being removed. Fixtures removed must be clearly shown on the plans. This form is not required to replace or relocate fixtures, but replacement and relocation must be clearly labeled on the plans.

C. Hazardous Materials Questionnaire: All nonresidential projects must have a completed Hazardous Materials Questionnaire (DS-3163) at the time of plan review. Refer to Information Bulletin 116, "Disclosure Requirements for Hazardous Materials." Certain responses on this questionnaire will require the completion of the Bureau of Fire and Life Safety's "Hazardous Materials Information" form (FPB-500).

D. Application for Unreasonable Hardship Exception: This may be required for disabled access (see Part VII).

VI. DRAWINGS TO INCLUDE

Following is a list of drawings that must be provided, depending on the scope of work:

A. Intended use. Plans must identify the intended use or nature of the business (e.g., electronic assembly).

B. Plot Plan/Site Plan. This plan shows the general layout of the existing building site and indicates the location of the tenant improvement. It is acceptable to use a copy of an existing plot plan for the existing buildings as long as the scope of work is clear and the plan is readable and suitable for microfilming.

C. Floor Plan. This plan contains the interior dimensions of the space and the use of all rooms. Typically, the floor plan shows existing walls, the walls to be removed and new walls. It notes interior partitions, demising walls, one hour corridors, etc. It shows windows and doors; door hardware and threshold details; the location of plumbing fixtures noting new, existing, relocated and removed; and the location and type of all electrical equipment.

The floor plan also shows disabled accessibility. For information on requirements, call (619) 446-5400.

D. Reflected ceiling plan. This plan contains the layout of lighting and ceiling typically notes new and existing.

E. Framing details. This plan contains sections specifying framing for interior partitions, demising walls, t-bars to support ceiling panels, lighting, etc.

F. Single line diagram. This plan represents the building electrical system, indicating any new work or changes in the existing.

G. Electrical load calculations/panel schedule. Electrical load calculations or a panel schedule is shown when there are changes to the electrical system.

H. Lighting plan. This plan shows any new lighting fixtures and how they are to be switched.

I. Mechanical and plumbing plans. These plans contain type and location of each air conditioning or heating unit and the associate supply and return air for same. They show as well the size, type and location of all rough plumbing.

J. Title 24 energy compliance. Show compliance with the energy package for the existing building or submit with Title 24 energy calculations. Information and publications on Title 24 Energy Standards are available from the California Energy Commission, (800) 772-3300.

VII. DISABLED ACCESSIBILITY

Publicly funded buildings and facilities, privately funded public accommodations; and commercial facilities are required to be accessible to persons with physical disabilities in compliance with the California State Buildings Standards Code (Title 24).

Buildings and structures which must comply include, but are not limited to: hotel, motel, restaurant, bar, theatre, auditorium, store, bank, laundromat, beauty and barber shop, church, repair shop, office, factory, warehouse, etc.

Existing buildings and facilities must comply when alterations, repairs or additions are to be made. Compliance includes a primary entrance to the building or facility; the path of travel to the area of alteration, repair or addition; sanitary facilities; drinking fountains, and public telephones.

Small projects may qualify for an exception. Where the cost of alterations necessary to make these features comply disproportionately increases the cost of the project, an unreasonable hardship exception may be granted. A disproportionate increase occurs when the cost of providing accessible features exceeds 20 percent of the cost of the project without these features.

Even if an unreasonable hardship exception is granted, those features which can be made to comply by spending an additional 20 percent, must be done.

Only those features which increase the additional cost more than 20 percent are exempt.

Plans must show those accessibility features to be included. For additional information or clarification of requirements contact a Structural Engineering Senior in the Building Development Review Division at (619) 446-5400.

VIII. THE PLAN CHECK PROCESS

During the initial tenant improvement appointment clearances are determined. Clearances are determined by use, occupancy, type of construction, location, municipal ordinances and the scope of work. You will be instructed how to obtain approvals for all the clearances. You are encouraged to obtain a list of the clearances required at your initial interview with the Information and Application Services Division.

Additional clearances can be added to a project's requirements during the plan check process. Information regarding clearances specific to your project may be obtained by phoning 581-7171 to access the City's interactive voice response system. You may also obtain information by accessing your plan file on the Plan Finder computers located in the Development Services Center.

As the plans are reviewed, questions may arise that cannot be resolved immediately. If this is the case, the plan checker will prepare a review sheet noting the items that need to be clarified. When the plans have been modified as requested on the review sheet, call (619) 446-5300 to obtain a tenant improvement re-check appointment.

When all clearances have been approved and both sets of your plans have been stamped approved, you are ready for your permit. You may return to the Tenant Improvement Counter if approvals are complete on the same day as your initial appointment. Otherwise, you will need to set another Tenant Improvement appointment by calling (619) 446-5300.

IX. PERMIT FEES

Building permit fees must be paid when the permit is issued. Refer to Information Bulletin 102, "General Fee Schedule," for further details on fees.

When adding plumbing fixtures, water and sewer capacity fees may be due. Capacity credit is applied to the meter when fixtures are removed and not replaced. For information on fees, refer to Information Bulletin 104, "Schedule for Water and Sewer Fees."

Additional demand on the water meter may result in a meter upgrade. An increase in meter size requires additional capacity fees to be paid to the County Water Authority. The Plan Review Specialist can prepare the Certificate of Compliance for the County Water Authority. A separate check is required for payment.

Note: Separate building, electrical, mechanical, plumbing and gas permits are required for commercial construction. These permits can be issued at the same

time as the building permit, from the same application, by checking the appropriate boxes in Item 1 of the Permit Application and completing Information Bulletin 103, "Fee Schedule and Worksheet for Mechanical, Plumbing/Gas, Electrical."

If there is a change in use for some of the space, such as warehouse to office, Housing Trust Fund Fees may be due. If Housing Trust Fund fees are applicable, you will be requested to call Facilities Financing, (619) 533-5950, for clearance and to have the fees added to your permit.

X. WHEN THE PERMIT IS ISSUED

For permit issuance you must present your completed forms as described in Section V, two sets of approved plans, your County Assessor set of plans, and any correction sheets generated during the plan review process, one set of any required calculations, and be prepared to pay required fees. If you wish to obtain mechanical, plumbing/gas, or electrical permits, present a completed Information Bulletin 103 worksheet.

You will receive an Inspection Record card at permit issuance. The inspector signs this card as the construction is inspected and approved. For information on project inspections, refer to Information Bulletin 120, "How to Obtain Project Inspections."

The approved plans, the Inspection Record card and the permit are important records and should be retained.